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ABSTRACT

To achieve effective intercultural communication, participants must understand how behavioral differences may lead to miscommunication. Such behavioral differences can be illustrated by Arab and American nonverbal behavior. Individualism is the ideal for the American middle class, whereas Arabs are motivated by public opinion. Yet in the Arab world, losing control in public is more excusable than it is in the Western world. Arabs also use a wide range of gestures with subtle physical differences that amount to great semantic variants, and these are generally the same throughout the Middle East. For example, the thumb-forefinger circle with remaining three fingers extended upwards has been borrowed from the West to indicate "OK," for which meaning the signing hand is shaken a couple of times gently. Without the shaking, the gesture is interpreted as an obscene female genital reference. Paralingual aspects of communication are sometimes even more elusive and prone to misunderstanding than gestures. A single tongue click as opposed to a multiple click, for example, is an Arab alternative to an eyebrow raise, head toss, or head shake, all of which may indicate "no." Arabs have also developed the ability to retreat into themselves to accommodate their need for privacy. Americans, on the other hand, create privacy by physically retreating and by closing doors. Other differences can be found in cultural values and notions. It is incumbent on the individual business person to examine personal style and ideas for these cultural implications and biases. (Paradigms that enable analyses of gestural and paralinguistic communication are suggested, and a four-page bibliography and extensive tables comparing Arab and American nonverbal behavior are included.) (HOD)

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CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN AND ARAB NONVERBAL AND PARALINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION

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CONTRASTIVE ANALYSES OF AMERICAN AND ARAB

NONVERBAL AND PARALINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION

Abstract

This paper focuses on Arab and American differences in nonverbal communication behavior. Nonverbal behaviors, including gestural and paralinguistic behaviors, for Arabs and Americans are compared. Possible contradictory signals and incorrect assumptions are explored.

While the paper is written from the assumption that the American is in the Arab society, it is suggested that similar problems arise, only in reverse for an Arab in the United States.

The paper concludes with an underscoring that it is essential for the participants to understand where behavioral differences could lead to miscommunication.

This paper will examine varieties of nonverbal and paralingual aspects of American and Arab communication. Emphasis will be on contradictory or incorrect assumptions and signals likely to be encountered in a business or social situation. While the paper is written from the standpoint of an American in Arab society, the same problems arise in reverse for the Arab living, working or visiting the United States. The essence of this paper is the thesis that in intercultural communication, it is essential for the participants to understand where behavioral differences may lead to miscommunication.

Background of Nonverbal Behavior Studies

During the 1920s-1930s, one emphasis of nonverbal communication studies was on facial expression and how it revealed psychological states and feelings. Studies in the 1930s and 1940s were concerned with movement styles and their relation to severe neuroses. Ten years later, facial expression again became a popular topic for study.

The 1950s also saw a new trend with Birdwhistell and others: the studying of body motion as related to cultural education. The 1960s, too, saw increased interest in cross-cultural studies of many types, including comparative analysis of primate and human development and behavior.

The results of these experiments in nonverbal and intercultural communication in past decades have been applied to the training of

businesspeople for successful international relations (Landis II, 290-294). Exercises have dealt with gift giving and receiving, greeting one's co-workers and dealing with them in business and social situations (Reardon 12-14). Role-play techniques have been carefully designed for the business world, but much less for academia (Robinson 30-34; Samovar & Porter 78-85; Hoopes & Ventura 48-52). These efforts have been situation specific in hopes that fewer and less expensive faux pas will occur.

Birdwhistell said that nonverbal behavior (NVB) conveys 65 percent of one's message (Aylesworth 5). Hall claimed that NVB accounts for 90 percent (Hall, Dance 4). All accounts of influence varied but there was consistency in the belief that nonverbal communication was a central factor in the observation of human behavior.

Earlier, Charles Darwin believed that expressive behavior evolved or vanished relative to its value for species survival in much the same way as physical structures. However, biologically useful acts, perhaps like the universal smile, laugh, frown and cry, developed into links with emotional experiences of life (Weitz 13). Darwin suggested that studies be made with infants and blind children to determine if such behaviors were indeed innate. In 1970, Eibl-Eibesfeldt proved they were (Morris, Manwatching 12-13; Weitz 13-22). Ekman and Friesen's experiments showed that cultural display rules affect those behaviors significantly (Ekman 135-149).

The ethological approach of Darwin, however, lost favor during the heyday of "Behavioralism." Birdwhistell, for instance, in his studies of 1963 and 1967, maintained there were no nonverbal universal

communicators. Birdwhistell held that an individual's nonverbal behaviors were culturally determined (Weitz 22).

But the 1960s and 1970s also saw anthropological studies by Lorenz, Goodall and others that returned to observation of apes in order to compare and contrast innate versus learned behavior.

In spite of years of time and progress, confusion continues. No one has unequivocally established either the source or the influence of nonverbal communication behavior. Nonetheless, the effects are both evident and established. These effects are especially evident in intercultural communication.

American vs. Arab Attitudes and Values

Hoopes and Ventura remind us that we carry our basic cultural assumptions wherever we go. Like NVB, our senses of reality, or how we pattern our world, are largely outside consciousness (47). The American middle-class sees the "Self" as an entity apart from the world: individualism is the ideal. Arabs, on the other hand, are motivated by public opinion. Yet in the Arab world, losing control in public is more excusable than in the Western world. "Doing" is the preferred means of American self expression (Hoopes & Ventura 47). An Arab is taught to meditate on his "Self" quietly (Reardon 13). An Arab might be construed as an idle daydreamer by an American. Westerners consider Arabs primitive and superstitious for their ideals of contentment, detachment and faith (Patai, Israel 281-282). The Hollywood portrayal of Bedouins appearing magically from behind Sahara dunes has helped foster this image (Atiyeh 21). The close stance and deep gaze of Arab communicants

can be unsettling for Americans accustomed to greater social distance and shifting gaze (Hall, Hidden Dimension 110-122; Henley 152-156).

Americans, seeking understanding of those differences, should be aware of their own cultural values: 1) the sanctity of private property, 2) the desirability of physical comfort, 3) the need for tangible measures of success, and 4) a sense of "oughtness" (Hoopes & Ventura 46). These notions are integral aspects of American business and social standards, practices, and expectations. The American system of logic and inferential thinking is built into business contracts, and are expected of others in professional relations. But these underlying assumptions are not totally shared by Arab cultures and may lead to confusion or insult by one party for the other.

The history of Blacks in the United States, for example, has led to the association of dark skin with inferior status and ability. That, combined with America's romanticized view of Arabs, can create unconscious confusion or aversion for the people with whom one needs to establish a rapport, or this history can contribute to an unrealistically romantic view of Arabs.

American gestures, for example, have a largely European background. As immigrants arrived, no pressure was put on them to drop their native gestures as they learned English (Morris, Gestures xv). However, as each ethnic group fought its way up the social ladder, its people adjusted both their spoken and nonverbal language to the local standards for success (Argyle 86-90).

Clearly, then, as one develops the ability to speak a language, unconsciously, the gestures that accompany speech are absorbed from

surrounding native speakers (Laird 14). "Gestures are ... borrowed like foreign words ..." and American NVB is derived from the many different ethnic groups of the country. One result of immigration is that it is now difficult to say which gestures are distinctly American (Kendon 394-409).

Not all group specific gestures are interchanged, but many are understood across ethnic lines, i.e., the Italian obscene forearm jerk. Gestures are contextually linked, to the situation, and along with the interplay of body and facial movements and utterances, they together convey the speaker's intent.

But still, it is the receiver's interpretation of those signals that determines what is communicated (Robinson 50; Samovar, Porter & Jain 13-16; Samovar & Porter 17-19).

At the same time, Arabs have been influenced by foreign cultures and languages (Morris, Manwatching 54). Most recently, the extensive import of American television and movies has influenced Arab cultures. Many of the colloquial implications are lost in translation or editing as is the American sense of humor where it differs from the film buyer's. In general, exposure to American films seems to have little influence on others' cultural values (DeSousa 20-22). So foreign viewers are left with caricatures and stereotypes of Americans. Adding insult to injury, these perceptions are usually out of date owing to the fact that much foreign television is managed by governments that tend to pay as little as possible for such imports and new films and programs are often beyond budgets. One result is old ideas and old stereotypes purveyed through cheap and old films.

It will be interesting, however, to watch and see if video piracy of new films and television shows effects changes in the cultural influence of the United States in the Arab world. Such a turn of events could update and change images of Americans.

The American traveller or business person might be the first or only personal contact with American culture for, given this circumstance, some of the Arab people met abroad. Therefore, it is important for the traveller to be aware of others' preconceived notions about Americans in order to not take offense at false impressions and also to be aware of stereotypical characteristics presumed by those others (Wolfson 118-123). It is also essential to recognize that isolated from one's cultural milieu, one comes to represent that entire culture in the eyes of other people, especially if personal contact with members of that culture has been limited.

Gestural Language

On another side, Arabs have different perspectives and different preconceived notions. The study of nonverbal communication has enabled more precise descriptions of this.

The study of nonverbal communication has followed, to some extent, the course of linguistics. David Efron coined the term "emblems" for movement patterns with precise meanings (Kendon 401). Argyle discusses Efron's findings (256-258), shown in Figures 1 and 2 below. Efron compared gestural differences between Eastern Jews and Southern Italians in the United States.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Throughout the 1970s, psycholinguistic measurement techniques were applied to the study of nonverbal communication. Such was Birdwhistell's approach in Kinesics and Context. And in 1976, Zuckerman found that people who encoded well spontaneously were able to classify posed behavior types. Allen continued this type of investigation and found that deliberate behavior seemed to represent a caricature of the spontaneous action: more vigorous, exaggerated, and with more redundancy of specific actions and sequences of actions (Allen 225-226). Sparhawk offers the following emic or systemic perception of emblem formation in her paper on features of Persian gesture (Figure 3) (Kendon 427).

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

Sparhawk's depiction presents a paradigm for the contrastive analysis of American and Arab nonverbal communication. Arab nonverbal behavior is interesting when viewed as emblems.

Arabs employ a wide range of gestures with subtle physical differences that amount to great semantic variants and these are generally the same across the Middle East. Sparhawk equates the subtlety of Persian gesture variants with verbal minimal pairs. For example, the thumb-forefinger circle with remaining three fingers extended upwards has been borrowed from the West to indicate "OK," for which meaning the signing

hand is shaken a couple of time gently. Without the shaking, the gesture is easily confused with an obscene female genital reference. For the latter meaning, the circle may be round or squashed.

An upturned palm with thumb to forefinger tip and the other three fingers held across the palm indicates "wait" in Israel if the hand is still, and "slowly" if the signing hand is shaken from the wrist with an up-down motion. Saudis indicate "slowly" by joining the tips of four fingers with the thumb, palm upturned and hand shaken from the wrist. The Saudi or Israeli gestures without wrist movement can indicate smallness to an American (Valentine and Saint Damian 79-84). Arabs, on the other hand, indicate smallness by opening the fingers slightly and sliding the thumb to the base of the forefinger.

Vocal rhythm is the framework within which incoming verbal data is organized, synthesized and analyzed. Body gestures distinguish form words from function words within phonemic clauses by being concentrated on primary stress points. Studies in the 1970s showed that greater amounts of gesturing make a speaker's argument more persuasive (Woodall & Burgoon 208-210).

Sparhawk enumerates the varieties of Persian gestures and, while not Arabs, Persians' gestures do overlap with those of other Middle Eastern groups.

Morris studied Tunisians in Gestures, Greeks and Italians for Manwatching. Patai studied Palestinians and Arab Jews in Israel Between East and West and Lee discussed problems faced by businessmen in The American in Saudi Arabia.

According to Sparhawk, there are twenty-one major designator features for Persian gestures: ten of the hand, five of the arm, five of the face and one of the neck. She divides distinct body areas ("tabulas") into fifteen features: five separate areas of the face, the neck, four areas of the arm and four of the trunk of the body. In addition, there are twenty-eight signation features in Persian: seven regarding gestural direction, seven of gestural shape, seven of contact, three of dynamics and four of relative position or movement of the two hands (see Figure 3).

Sparhawk contrasts the number of hand designator features in Persian with American Sign Language (ASL). She counts nineteen designator features for the hand which, in ASL, is used to represent speech while Persian subdivides the hand into twenty-one distinct features of fingers and right-left implications, the gestures of which are adjuncts to speech. ASL is a "main channel system" with more digital distinctions than the analogical Persian gesture system (Kendon 426-435).

Birdwhistell recorded American gestures which can be overlayed on Sparhawk's system. Birdwhistell's results contrast the importance of the whole body as indicator for Americans with the very different Middle Eastern concentration on the head and hands. Birdwhistell counted twenty-five head motions, thirteen eye positions and twenty poses of the mouth. He noted fifteen significant body positions and twenty-one of the arm.

The above elaborations show the intricacies and fascination of nonverbal communication. They also show that when Americans and Arabs interact, it is reasonable to expect some misinterpretation. Just as

similar sets of sounds produce thousands of mutually unintelligible languages, similar human needs and strategies are manifested by different uses of sounds and silences, personal proxemics and movements of the body.

Figure 4 shows Hall's account of the interplay of receptors in proxemic perception. Hall adds still another perspective and system for contrasting American and Arab nonverbal communication. Hall's system is somewhat more broadly based in that it goes well beyond gestures. He proposes that we look at various aspects of communication, including attitudes. Hall suggests, by doing so, we can improve the likelihood of successful intercultural communication.

FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

Synthesis of these systems combined with personal observation resulted in the following chart comparing American and Arab meanings of gestures. Similarities are also included. Needless to say, the list is a beginning and is by no means complete.

FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE

Paralanguage

Paralingual aspects of communication are sometimes even more elusive and prone to misunderstanding than gestures. Grunts and silences are subtle cultural conventions that may be used in conjunction

with other utterances or gestures that reinforce them, or do not reinforce them. They are more difficult to observe than body language, and therefore require explicit analysis. Their frequent inclusion in discourse might lead a non-native speaker to assume they are morphemes; alternately, a foreigner might take offense at the implication of so much perceived hesitation and uncertainty (Luthy 19-33).

Arabs, like Americans, applaud, whistle and cheer to show approval. In the United States, whistling is not appropriate behavior in "high culture" situations like theatre, opera or symphony concerts. However, even in these contexts an American may shout, though he is limited to "bravo," and may stand while applauding. American booing for displeasure, which may be accompanied by whistling or stamping, can be ambiguous to someone unfamiliar with the audience's criteria for the performance in question.

In the 1970s, Duncan and Fiske recorded conversations in order to learn the breakdown of turn-taking behavior, verbal as well as nonverbal (Druckman 48). The following illustration (Figure 6) shows that conversational patterns are affected by both number and type of paralingual cues (see also Weitz 302-303).

FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE

An Arab might accompany his "yes" nod with a short "[ʔɛh]" and his "no" head toss with "[nʌʔ]" which may get confused with an American's use of slightly elongated versions of those sounds for query. One must remember that intonation is different for the respective sounds: the

Arab's use of both has lower pitch and no rising intonation for inquiry. Arabs also have an inquiring "[hmm.]".

"[ʕ:h]" with rising intonation indicates that an American cannot hear, but a lower pitched version is employed by Arabs as a warning or doubt of truthfulness. Arabs may also use "[hÅ]" as a warning.

Americans show agreement with "[ahA]" and "[ʔahm]." Arabs sometimes use the latter for agreement, but it is more common to say "aywah" or some other actual word; in fact the pensive American "[ʔm]" might be taken for a rudeness by Arabs (Luthy 19-22).

Native English speakers vary the intonation of the accident indicators "oops" and "uh-oh" per the seriousness of the event (Luthy 28-29). Arabs excuse themselves with the word "afwan."

"[Ah]" interspersed English discourse so much it could well be some word rather than a hesitation signal. The Arab equivalent is "[mm]"

An alternative to the Arab "no," eyebrow raise, head toss or head shake is a single tongue click; this may accompany any one or combination of the nonverbal gestures for emphasis or be used alone (see Figure 7 list). Americans indicate "too bad" or "shame" with a multiple click (the number of clicks being relative to the seriousness of the problem at hand).

Such subtle extralingual signals pervade all languages and yet they are often ignored. Nasality, pitch and length vary the meaning of the utterances although they are generally reinforced by nonverbal communication appropriate in the context. Explicit instruction in spotting and interpreting these signals is necessary (Saint Damian and Valentine).

Druckman cites studies by DePaulo that measured speech errors, rate and quantity, and tone of voice as indicators of truthfulness or deceit. He cites additional experiments published by Constanzo, Wiegele and others, which measured pitch, stress and tone as indicators of emotion and truthfulness (Druckman 44-47).

Mehrabian investigated implicit aspects of communication including the use of "ah" sounds, incoherent noises, pauses and speech rate in 1971 and 1972. He discovered there tend to be more errors and a lower rate of speech when one is being deceitful. Various studies by Mahl, Pope and Siegman and others showed that increased intrusion of "ahs" and noises correlated with speaker stress (Druckman 45-49).

The point is that paralinguistic behavior differs in American and Arab culture and that we need to learn more about these differences.

Silent Language

Arabs generally live in crowds. Even in a large house, the members of the family and their guests sit together in one room. The entire family also usually sleeps together in one room. These people develop the ability to retreat into themselves and thus accommodate their need for privacy. Some British do so, too. Silence then indicates one's wish to be left alone. Americans, on the other hand, become uncomfortable with "the silent treatment" which is perceived as rudeness; it can cause acute discomfort at maximum (Hayakawa 79).

Americans create privacy by physically retreating and by closing doors. When territories in Arab society are either officially public as in institutions, or subject to overlapping ownership as in a home, one's physical isolation creates anxiety or suspicion and is certain to be breached by others.

Silence means embarrassment for Americans, it is "empty space in time." But it "shouts the deepest feelings" of an Arab (Hall, Dance 99).

Arab Values and Notions As they Impact Communication

Arabs are generally conservative and bound to proud traditions of thinking and clan strength. They have been resentful of the imposition of alien cultures that demeaned their own. Today, exploration of foreign social and cultural novelty through mass media and business contacts is destabilizing some of the forces of ancestral imitation, causing varying degrees of disunity among families and communities throughout the Arab world (Morris, Naked Ape 127).

Leuchtenburg explains that America has lived in relative isolation from the Arab world since the European era of colonization. Furthermore, the Arab presence in the United States has been inconspicuous, fairly recent, and small in numbers (Atiyeh 15-18).

Americans have retained a romanticized view of Arabs as the previously mentioned film version Bedouins: penniless, primitive and magical. Recent political and economic events have reversed that fantasy. Now Americans see the Arab as a super sophisticated millionaire who just buys a British castle out of his pocket money when he needs a room for the night (Atiyeh 24).

The other "Arabs" who come to Americans' notice these days are the Palestinians, Lebanese and Iranians. Here the images are confusing and the attendant effects on nonverbal communication are unclear.

It is incumbent on the individual business person to examine personal style and ideas for these cultural implications and biases.

Arab associates or contacts, for example, could not respect a female whose dress or behavior flaunted their conservative standards. It would be difficult enough for an Arab man to accept a foreign woman as a serious equal or superior.

Arabs generally learn by rote. Details are memorized and retained. On the other hand, Americans are taught to infer, to look at the broad picture and future ramifications, and to improvise. Arabs refer to the Koran and to proverbs for examples while Americans quote the Bible or contemporary situations to exemplify. Americans are encouraged to hypothesize examples, as well.

Below is an examination of some of the conflicting notions of lifestyle and values that can cause general miscommunication and ambivalence in intercultural relations.

FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to contrast and, at times, compare American and Arab nonverbal and paralingual communication. The paper suggests that there are paradigms that enable analyses of gestural and paralinguistic communication. Experience in both cultures adds richness to the comparisons. Extensive tables comparing Arab and American nonverbal behavior are included.

Further it is suggested that understanding "others'" values is central to the understanding of nonverbal communication differences.

Better understanding of these value differences is currently imperative.

The amount and the types of contact between Americans and Arabs are growing continuously. Hopefully, better understanding of each other's motivations may help prevent the development of aggravation to the point of violence, or will help alleviate tension and allow Americans to deal with such problems to the satisfaction of all, should problems occur.

Americans have been able to isolate themselves from other cultures in the past, but no longer do Americans want to nor can do without others. The past immigrant ideal of assimilation led Americans to become arrogant about their values and behaviors at the expense of learning who and what they really are and how their culture relates to the other societies of the world. Americans tend to be ignorant of other languages and ways, and worse, too often do not want to learn about them. That ignorance is definitely not bliss.

This paper was offered in the hope that an understanding of the contrasting philosophical and nonverbal aspects underlying English and Arabic communication will help foster better intercultural relations.

The Arab culture is no longer remote for many Americans. Images of Scheherazade, Omar Sherif, oil wells, and long garb need to be replaced with the touch of reality.

The study of nonverbal communication differences between Arab and American cultures is a beginning. After all, we are increasingly more likely to become neighbors, in the best sense of the word.

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Ghetto Jews: *a* head gestures, *b* gesturing with lapel of interlocutor, *c* gesturing with object, *d* thumb-digging movement, digging out an idea, *e* palm on cheek or behind ear, astonishment, bewilderment, rejection, *f* plucking beard or stroking chin in thoughtfulness, deliberation, or doubt. (from Efron, 1941)

Figure 1. The gestures of East European Jews, rpt. in Michael Argyle, Bodily Communication (New York: International University, 1975) 257.

	Eastern Jews	*Southern Italians*
Area of gestures	confined	wide radius
Shape	angular, zig-zag, sinuous	round, elliptical
Axis	from waist to elbow towards other person	from shoulder at side of body
Plane	one hand, head	two hands
Parts of body	jerky transitions	smooth flow
Tempo	pokes or grasps other, close proximity	no touching
Touching	ideographs (showing direction of thought), batons (showing tempo), pointing.	emblems (i.e. with fixed arbitrary meaning), illustrations
Type of gesture		

Figure 2. Gesture comparisons (from Efron 1941) rpt. in Michael Argyle, Bodily Communication (New York: International University, 1975) 256.

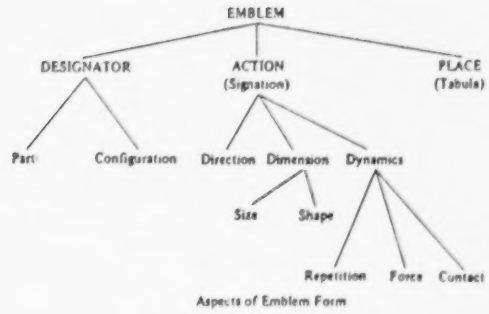

Figure 3. Aspects of emblem form from Carol M. Sparhawk, "Contrastive Identification Features of Persian Gesture." Nonverbal Communication, Interaction and Gesture. Ed. Adam Kendon. Paris: Mouton 1981. 427.

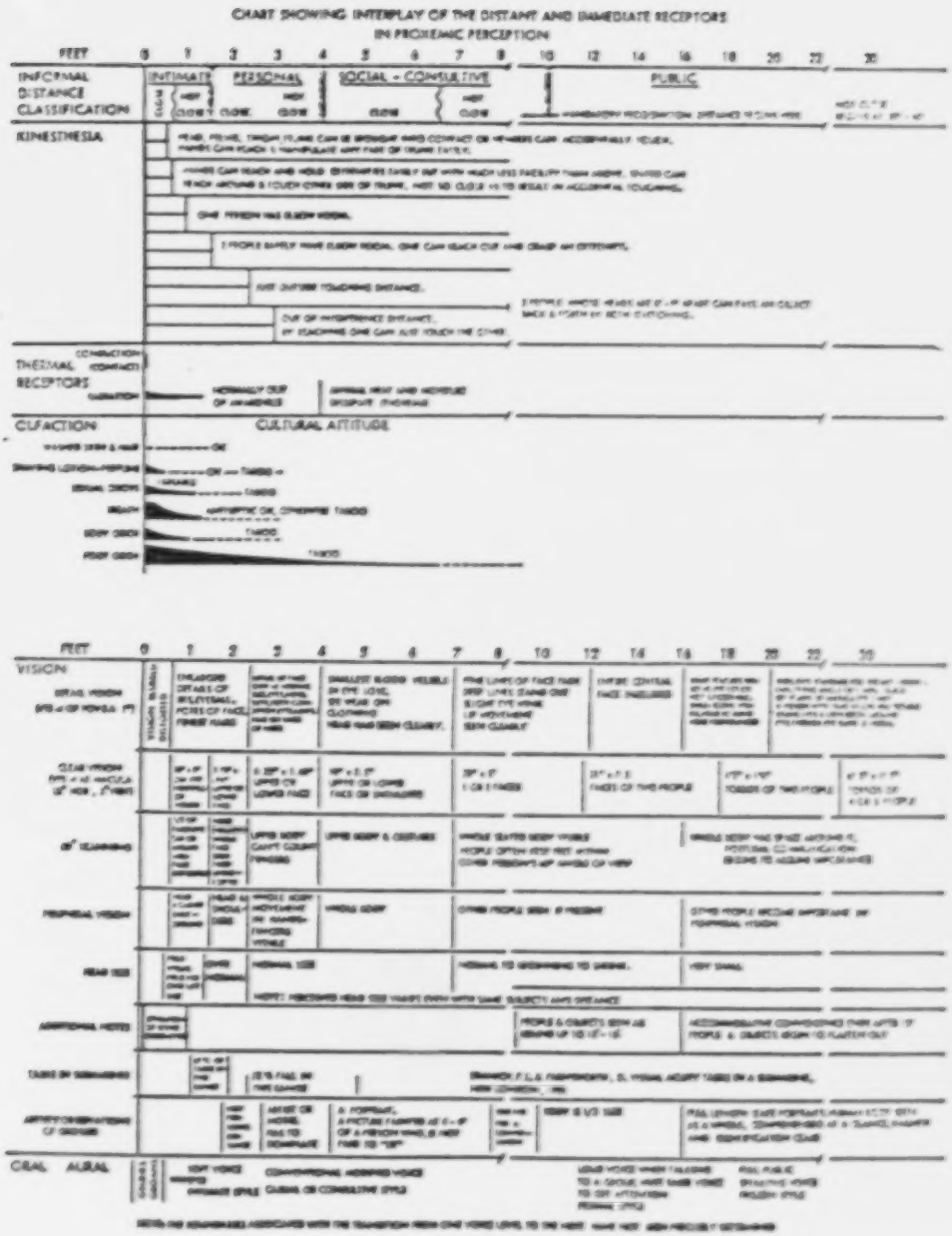

Figure 4. Receptors in proxemic perception from Edward T. Hall, The Hidden Dimension (New York: Doubleday-Anchor Books, 1982) 126-127.

Figure 5. Comparison of American and Arab Meanings of Gestures

Body Part	Gesture	American Meaning	Arab Meaning
Head	Toss upward		"No"
	With eyebrow raise		Stronger "no"
	Tongue click added		Emphatic "no"
	Shake side to side		"No" (especially Saudi Arabia)
	Sway or bob		"Maybe," "probably yes"
	Tap with fingers, usually side or forehead	Thinking	Thinking
	Fingers hold forehead or head	Headache or problems	Headache or problems
	Rub head	Headache	"Maybe"
	Scratch	Thinking; scratching an itch	Scratching an itch
	Nod up and down	"Yes"	"Yes" (Saudi Arabia)
Ear	Touch or light pull		Warning, especially to a child
	Pull lobe	Complicity (Britain only)	
	Handcup ear	"I can't hear you"	"I can't hear you"
Eye	Pull lower lid	Realization (Britain only)	Stupidity, doubt
	Stare	Rude, a threat	Contact with the other's soul
	Gaze	Between strangers: sexual interest	Intimacy, sexual and nonsexual
	Gaze (conversational)	Speaker gazes to and from listener	Speaker and listener hold gaze

Figure 5, continued

Body Part	Gesture	American Meaning	Arab Meaning
Eye	Avoiding gaze	Hiding something	Rude in conversation
	Lowering gaze	Submission, expected between strangers in a crowd	Submission, expected of religious persons with strangers of opposite sex; politeness in children being chastised
	Hiding (as with dark glasses)	Can be discomforting	Rude during conversation
	Hand covers	Possibly headache	Smearing by one's eyes
Nose	Thumbing	Mockery, teasing	
	Tap side	Conspiracy (Britain only)	
	Thumb-forefinger to nostrils		"Go to hell," "It stinks"
Tooth	Flick	A negative	"Nothing" (Tunisia)
Mouth	Mouth-mouth kiss:		
	Male - male	Homosexual friends	Alright for friends and family
	Female - female	Homosexual friends, close family	Friends, family
	Male - female	Sexual, family	Sexual, alright for close family relations
	Mouth-cheek kiss:		
	Male - male	Close family, some friends	Family, friends
	Female - female	Family, friends	Family, friends
	Male - female	Family, some friends	Close family, some close friends

Figure 5, continued

Body Part	Gesture	American Meaning	Arab Meaning
Mouth	Mouth-head kiss	Affection or blessing (usually parent to child)	Blessing (usually elders to children)
	Mouth-hand kiss	Male-female: admiration	Child-elder: kissed hand of elder applied to child's head: respect display
			Same sex (especially elders): respectful greeting display
	Belle thumbs very, can involve gaze behavior as well)	Acknowledgement, sexual invitation	Acknowledgement, sexual invitation
Face	Chin flick		Disinterest, "Get lost"
	Cheek stroke: two fingers stroked vertically	"Kid," "chic"	
	Hand covers		"Fool"
Arm	Forearm jerk	Obscenity	Strength (the gesture involves more of a grasp than a jerk)
	Chop (one elbow left hand down right arm		Obscenity
	Forearm grasp		Strength
	Exposure	Irrelevant	Improper for women
Hand	Left vs. right		Left hand "unclean"
	Flat with thumb up	"OK"	"OK"
	Thumb between forefinger and middle finger	Obscenity	Obscenity
	Touch between strangers in public crowd	Generally taboo	Irrelevant

Figure 5, continued

Body Part	Gesture	American Meaning	Arab Meaning
Hand	Handshake (only right hand to right hand)	Acceptable by all, expected	Same sex: ritualized; becoming acceptable for opposite sex except Saudi Arabia
	Closed fist, forefinger extended horizontally	Indicator	Indicator, gun (may add middle finger)
	With thumb up	Gun	Gun
	Fore- and middle-fingers apart	Two	Two
	Fist with vertical fore- middle finger extension, fingers apart	V-victory: British variants: palm to actor is an obscene gesture, palm to observer is V-victory	V-victory: Greek: a mild form of the moutza ("Go to hell")
	Above gesture with V enclosing the nose		Obscenity
	Upward flick of wrist		"Nothing," a dismissal
	Upward turn of wrist, holding palms open	"I don't know"	"I don't know"
	Upward toss of forearm		Emphatic dismissal
	Downward turn of palm		Secret; "Follow me"
	Palm down, held horizontally	"Wait"	"Wait"
	Hand to genitals in public (male)	Obscenity	Irrelevant, scratching
	Horizontal curved palm up, fingers together	"Give"	"Give," "Come," prayer indication
	Above gesture but tensed and jiggled		"I'll strangle you"
	Flat, fingers together		Indicator, pointer

Figure 5, continued

Body Part	Gesture	American Meaning	Arab Meaning
Hand	Vertical, palm out, fingers together	"Stop"	"No," "stop"
	Horns: forefinger-pinky extension	Cuckhold	Cuckhold (directed down possibly protection from the Evil Eye)
	Middle finger extended from palm-down fist		Cuckhold (at least in Saudi Arabia)
	Middle finger extended	Obscenity (palm-up fist)	Obscenity (palm up and open, finger extended above)
	Beckon	Palm up (palm down implies secrecy or urgency	Palm down (palm up used more in Saudi Arabia)
	Wave acknowledgement	Palm to observer	Palm to observer
	Vertical, palm out, fingers apart	"Stop"	"Stop," "no" (Greek: moutza: an insult)
	Thumb-forefinger circle, 3 fingers extended upwards, palm down	"OK" (possibly with a lateral tongue click)	"OK"; obscenity (circle may be squashed); "She is beautiful" (signing hand is shaken)
	Palm up, horizontal, thumb to base of forefinger		Smallness
	Pursed palm up, hand still	Possibly "Give a little bit"	"Slowly" (Saudi Arabia); with left hand: "Son of a whore"
	Semi-purse (thumb-forefinger)	"A little bit"	"Bait" (Israel) (Israelis are not as adamant about right vs left hand as Arabs)
	As above, hand shaken slowly		"Slowly"
	Crossed fingers	For good luck	
	Fingertip kiss	Praise	Praise

Figure 5, continued

Body Part	Gesture	American Meaning	Arab Meaning
Heart	Hand to heart	Pledge of allegiance, sincerity	Sincerity; acceptable alternative to male-female handshake
Orifices	Cleaning, especially with fingers	Taboo in public	Irrelevant
Body	Bump into in public	Requires verbal apology	Usually apologize; in Israel: repair damage if done but no apology necessary
Legs, feet	Cross legs	Irrelevant males: knee-ankle (U.S.), legs together (Britain) females: usually legs together	Taboo: involves showing others the sole of the foot; feet should face away from others
	Exposure of legs	Irrelevant for males and females	Improper for all adults; modern women wear shirts below the knee

HYPOTHESIZED SIGNALS USED IN CONVERSATION BY THE SPEAKER AND AUDITOR

Signal	*Constituent cues*	*Effect in Conversation Pattern*
Speaker turn	Intonation-marked clause Sociocentric sequence Grammatical completeness Paralinguistic drawl Decrease in pitch and/or loudness on sociocentric sequence End of gesticulation	Auditor may attempt to take turn
Speaker gesticulation	Gesticulation Tensed hand position	Speaker suppresses auditor's attempts to take turn
Speaker state	Turning head away from partner Begin gesticulation	New turn begins
Speaker within turn	Grammatical completeness Turning head toward auditor	Auditor may respond in back channel; speaker retains turn
Between-unit auditor back channel	Five different types, both audible and visible	Auditor provides feedback; speaker retains turn
Early auditor back channel	Same as between-unit auditor back channel	Auditor provides feedback; speaker retains turn
Speaker continuation	Turning head away from auditor	New within-turn unit begins

Source: From S. D. Duncan, Jr., and D. W. Fiske, "Dynamic Patterning in Conversation," *American Scientist*, 1979, vol. 67, p. 94. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Figure 6. Turn-taking signals from Daniel Druckman, Richard M. Rozelle and James C. Baxter, Nonverbal Communication: Survey, Theory, and Research (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1982) 67.

Figure 7. Conflicting Attitudes and Perceptions of East and West

Topic	American	Arab
Time	Adherence to schedules is important.	Involvement with people and transactions is important.
	Tangible: time can be spent, wasted, saved, etc.	Time is merely a point of reference.
	"Later" has numerical implication.	"God's will" controls the sequencing of events so one can plan but not promise to keep appointments; no point to long-range planning.
	Anniversaries are significant as markers of supposed immediate change.	Anniversaries other than holidays and saints' days are irrelevant usually.
	One expects things will happen fast once one makes up his/her mind to act; we ignore the patterns being woven by our actions, yet we do have the proverb, "Actions speak louder than words."	Words may substitute for action especially if the action would be violent.
	Monochronic: involvement of people with one thing at a time.	Polychronic: multiple involvements simultaneously are the rule.
	First come, first served.	People are served by order or rank and status, or by pressure to be served first, e.g., at a ticket window.
	"Me first."	Family and community first.
	Activities are coordinated, scheduled; priorities are judged; overlapping onto another's allotted time is discourteous.	Matters are handled as they arise even if one overlaps onto another.
	American history is about 500 years old, dates are known; knowledge of specific dates of major events is considered important.	History goes back thousands of years; dates and time are unspecified and generalized.
	"X-culture": the past remains important, e.g., titles for the former: ex-wife, retiree, widower.	One does not speak of one's former mate although reincarnation is believed in, and people commonly discuss their 'former lives'.
	Novelty is good.	Old and traditional are good.
	Time is linear: cause and effect; relation of events.	Events are sequential, e.g., marriage is arranged by the family and all assume love will follow.
	Time lapse between word and action leads to assumption no action will follow.	Words as wishes or intentions can substitute for actions.
Ethos, outlook	Nostalgia for the past is inconsistent; this-world achievement is the responsibility of the individual.	Nostalgia for a glorious past, fatalism about the future: the "Will of God" controls all.
	Responsibility of one to himself and his own interests.	Other directed: public opinion determines one's "face."

Figure 7, continued

Topic	American	Arab
Family	Nuclear family and individual responsibility.	Extended family and community allegiance may outweigh one's personal interests.
	Ideal: be individualistic.	Ideals: Obey elders and help maintain group harmony.
Democracy	Fairness and equality are the ideals but there is implicit discrimination in public and private spheres.	Family and community leaders dictate; there is explicit discrimination in public and private spheres.
Religion	Ritualized and institutionalized, generally apart from economic and technical concerns.	An integral aspect of life; a spiritual state leads to the "true reality."
Aesthetics	Technical advancement and complexity are attractive.	All work should be done carefully and be pleasing to see.
Space	Private physical space is necessary in public as well as in private; silence in discourse is perceived as emptiness.	Privacy is found within oneself; communal space is for all to share; silence indicates one's wish to be, in effect, alone.
Labor	Emphasis is on this-world achievement, "doing," busyness is preferred.	One works for one's maintenance; it is not necessary to overwork; work is a necessary burden.
	The worker is a cog in the machinery of the system.	The worker is an artisan who should exercise aesthetic judgement.
Entertainment	Difference and uniqueness when a new mode, or a remake of an old production for a new audience are practice; individualization is not essential.	Generally related to religion. Poetry and music are individualized but within traditional modes. Films tend toward soap opera types and historical drama.
Sports	Everyone should play for fun, including men and women together.	Children and youth play, but sports are considered more appropriate for boys.
Technology	Reliance on mechanical devices is the preferred norm.	Man should be self-reliant.
Aggression	Verbal aggression implies a degree of violent action will follow.	Verbal aggression, e.g., flamboyant rhetoric, can serve to diffuse passions and prevent physical violence.

Major sources: R. Patai, Israel Between East and West; E.T. Hall, The Hidden Dimension; and K. Reardon, International Business Gift Giving Customs.